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MY LADY DREAMS

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By EUGENE PILLOT

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[Boston,
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c1922.]

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Characters

THE LADY
MARIE, HER MAID
LITTLE OLD LADY
THE OTHER WOMAN
THE TWO ADORABLE CHILDREN

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no 1

MY LADY DREAMS

When the curtain rises we see a lady's boudoir, done in the luxurious manner of Louis Seize, soft pinks, white and gold. There is a fireplace on one side of the room, before it, but somewhat up-stage is a chaise longue piled high with cushions at its rear end. On the same side of the room is a door opening into the adjoining bedroom. On the opposite side of the room is a door leading to an outer hallway. To the rear of this door is a tall wardrobe with doors. At rear center is a dressing table, a long mirror and lights that send a glow down the middle of the room, the rest somewhat in shadow.

Before the mirror sits the Lady, a magnificent, queenly woman in an exquisite negligée. Behind her stands Marie, her maid, a trim little person in black dress and white apron and cap. She is putting the finishing touches to the Lady's hair; and now takes a step back to survey her work and to be sure that all is well.

THE LADY (*appraising the work in the mirror*). I don't think I would do a bit more to it, Marie.

MARIE. No?

LADY. No, I doubt if you have ever dressed my hair quite so becomingly as to-night.

MARIE. Thank you, my Lady.

LADY. And to-night — of all nights, Marie — I must heighten my most telling points. For to-night I start anew on conquest.

MARIE. My Lady means — Lord Varoné — you are not going to — ?

LADY (*determined, almost forcing the words*). Yes, I have decided not to marry Lord Varoné.

MARIE. I'm — sorry.

LADY (*defiantly*). Why should you be *sorry?*

MARIE. Oh, because Lord Varoné seems so — kind.

LADY. Kind?

[*Her voice is very hard at this moment.*

MARIE. Yes. When he stands near you so tall and straight — just like a fine young tree in the forest — and he speaks to you soft and gentle-like — he always makes me think I hear music in a church. And when he looks at you, my Lady! Oh, Madonna! In his eyes are a million stars that say he loves you, *he loves you!* Madonna, how can any woman turn down a man that looks at her like that?

LADY. Lord Varoné is a very selfish man, Marie.

MARIE. Ah, no, not with those eyes.

LADY. Yes, he wants me to do many things — should we marry — that my free spirit would never permit.

MARIE (*persuasively*). But for such a nice man —

LADY. For *no* man will I chain myself to the banalities of a household! What would become of my career, if I did? I have paid with my life blood to build myself up to where I am. I have only to whisper that I have an idea for a story or a novel or a play, and all the editors in the land will risk their lives in the scramble to outbid each other for it, even before I have put the first word on paper. That means power. To-day I am a famous writer, world renowned, almost a great *literateur*. If I marry Lord Varoné and fall in with his old-fashioned ideas, in six months I shall have lost my power in the literary world. I would be domestic.

MARIE. Would Lord Varoné want you to be so?

LADY. If one marries, lives in the country, superintends a country household, and has *children* — and Lord Varoné is *set* upon that point — *well* — !

MARIE. But what does it matter, if you love him, my Lady?

LADY. I will not let my love for him bring domesticity upon me. That is why I am giving him up!

MARIE. With all those stars in his eyes —

LADY. Don't remind me of his *good* points, Marie! I don't *want* to give him up! (*Half-dreamily, as she gazes at his photograph*) If I could only let myself love him as

much as I know I love him — ah, Voné, why must you be so wonderful? You must have been a Venetian prince in the olden times. It's torture to think of you — I want you so! But I won't have you, *no I won't!* (*Pushes the photograph aside*) Get out my dress, Marie, hurry up!

MARIE. Something for the dance?

LADY. No, I refused to go to the Ambassadors' Ball with Lord Varoné. It's the opera — I'm going with the Randalls. She will probably wear black. I'd better wear a contrast.

MARIE (*at the wardrobe*). The white metal cloth?

LADY. No, no — too much like a virgin being crucified.

MARIE. The rose or red-violet?

LADY. Bring the new green — that's good for my mood. Green is adaptability, spring, eternal life, or something. Yes, that's it. Let's have it quickly. (*She has slipped out of the negligée and Marie now slips the green gown on her — a superb creation in tones of green, brilliant as the river Nile when the spring sunlight picks out its lighter notes and sends them vibrating everywhere*) I always feel like Cleopatra in green. I wonder if she wore it. It seems to help one to control, to dominate. And Cleopatra was so successful in love. She knew how *not* to love.

MARIE. My Lady looks like a queen.

LADY (*gaily*). The queen who will not let herself love!

[*In the hallway a bell rings.*

MARIE. The front door-bell. All the servants are off to-night. I'd better answer.

LADY. Yes, you'd better, Marie. It might be important.

MARIE. I will be gone only a minute.

LADY. Very well. (*As Marie hurries out, the Lady resumes her seat before the dressing table. Musingly*) Suppose it is Voné? Suppose he wouldn't take "no" for an answer? Suppose he came anyway?

[*As though in answer to her query, both doors of the wardrobe fly open and a strange little old lady steps out. She might almost be one of Barrie's little old ladies come to life, so*

pinched and quaint and human she is in her gay shawl and poke bonnet with the wiggly rose on it. She walks with a limp and carries a cane to help her.

LITTLE OLD LADY (*pertly, yet sweetly*). Well, wouldn't you have him, my dearie?

LADY. What? Did somebody speak?

LITTLE OLD LADY (*coming forward so that the Lady sees her*). Well, my voice *is* cracked — most as much as a Sunday cup and saucer I saw once — but still I'd call it speaking, dearie.

LADY (*in her very grandest manner*). Who are you?

LITTLE OLD LADY (*simply*). Oh, nobody much.

LADY. How did you get in here? Was it you who rang the bell? Did Marie let you in?

LITTLE OLD LADY. Ah, no. I never have to be *let* in. I just come; and frequently when I am least expected. I never know when it is going to be, but I'm always there on time.

LADY. How absurd! You must be insane!

LITTLE OLD LADY. Not unless you are, dearie!

LADY. Do you mean to insinuate — ?

LITTLE OLD LADY. Not in *that* way, my pretty.

LADY (*losing her patience*). Well, I want to know — what are you doing here, in my house?

LITTLE OLD LADY. I had to come. You called me.

LADY (*aghast*). *I* called you?

LITTLE OLD LADY. And I always come when I'm called, double-quick.

LADY. Absurd!

LITTLE OLD LADY. No, no, not at all. Just remember back for a moment, if you will, dearie.

LADY. Please don't call me "dearie." It's a little familiar — and cheap.

LITTLE OLD LADY. Oh, no, not cheap. "Dearie" 's not cheap, when there's feeling in the heart behind the word. Anyway, before you heard my wee, pert, cracked cup-and-saucer voice, weren't you sitting there, sort of dreaming-like?

LADY (*not willing to commit herself*). Perhaps I was.

LITTLE OLD LADY. Then that's why I'm here.

LADY. What *do* you mean?

LITTLE OLD LADY. I'm part of your dreaming, dearie.

LADY. W-h-a-t! !

LITTLE OLD LADY. I'm just a memory that comes to you in your dreams.

LADY. Impossible! I never saw you before.

LITTLE OLD LADY. Oh, yes, you have!

LADY. Absurd! People don't dream of what they've never known. I'm modern enough to know that. Absurd!

LITTLE OLD LADY. Not at all, not at all. You've seen the likes of me in the old woman huddled by the lamp-post at the street corner, selling the evening papers. Oh, many times you've seen me there. And once you saw me in the eyes of a scrubwoman that you happened to notice on the floor of an office building, when you went there one morning at an odd hour. Oh, don't be afraid, I'll not tell why you went there. It was the human thing to do, all right. And another time you saw me in the tired little gray lady in the street car. Don't you remember she forgot herself and smiled at you?

LADY (*impulsively, half-musingly*). I have always wondered why she did that?

LITTLE OLD LADY. Only because you were young and pretty, bonny as a wild rose in a desert of scraggly faces.

LADY (*pleased*). O-oh.

LITTLE OLD LADY. You do remember now?

LADY. But how can you be the scrubwoman, the paper lady, *and* the tired little gray lady?

LITTLE OLD LADY. Oh, I'm not really any of them I'm just the ghost of many, many pinched little old ladies that one sees about a great city. All of their thin, wavery shadows are in my soul. But in my eyes they make for you a lady that you *do* know. Look a wee bit, look in my eyes and see if you don't know the lady there, look. [*She leans forward for the Lady to see.*

LADY (*surprised at what she sees*). But you can't be — *her?*

LITTLE OLD LADY (*proudly*). Ah, yes I am! I am Lord Varoné's mother. His very own mother!

LADY. But *she* is a very grand lady, tall, proud, magnificent!

LITTLE OLD LADY. She is all of that to the world, I grant you.

LADY. While you — you're not in the least like her — except the eyes —

LITTLE OLD LADY. Ah!

LADY. Why, you're even so lame you have to carry a cane!

LITTLE OLD LADY. Do you think I mind that? Not for a moment! I'll tell you how it was. When I was still almost young and my boy — Lord Varoné — was just starting his career in the world, I humbled my pride, I broke it in fact, to give him a chance that he *had* to have. It left me lame, that's why I carry a cane.

LADY. But Lord Varoné's mother does not carry a cane. She's tall and straight and walks superbly.

LITTLE OLD LADY. Ah, many a fine-walking lady has a limp in her soul, because of helping somebody that needed her. But do you imagine even one of the grand ladies cares a mite, if she has to carry a prop somewhere inside her? I don't think so. It only makes them walk straighter when they go into the world, and hold their heads high as horses with a checkrein.

LADY. I never thought of that.

LITTLE OLD LADY. How could you, my dearie? Have you ever given up anything that you cherished heart-close?

LADY. Have you come here to insult me?

LITTLE OLD LADY (*very kindly*). Hardly. Varoné's mother's eyes would not do that.

LADY. Then why — ?

LITTLE OLD LADY (*hesitant, for she is not sure of her ground*). I have come to ask you —

LADY. What?

LITTLE OLD LADY. Please marry him.

LADY. I'm sorry — I can't.

LITTLE OLD LADY. He won't make you lose your freedom.

LADY. How did you know it was that?

LITTLE OLD LADY. Ah, mothers know so many things that other people never suspect.

LADY. And at heart — mothers don't usually want their attractive sons to marry. They want to keep them for themselves.

LITTLE OLD LADY. That's only when they fear the girl.

LADY. And you don't fear me?

LITTLE OLD LADY. No one can round out Varoné's life for him as you can.

LADY. Indeed!

LITTLE OLD LADY. You can help him finish the career that I started for him.

LADY (*indignant*). So *that's* the idea! You want me to marry him because I possess qualities that will accomplish things for him! I'm to be a tool to polish the rough edges of his career. You must think I am a fool!

LITTLE OLD LADY. Oh, no.

LADY. And what would become of my own career in the meantime?

LITTLE OLD LADY. You would not lose. Your career would grow richer, along with his.

LADY. I doubt it.

LITTLE OLD LADY. Your whole life would become a sounding board of creation. Think of that, my dearie. You would be a harp of life, singing love to the winds of spring.

LADY. I can't believe it.

LITTLE OLD LADY. Don't say that. I want you to marry my boy. He loves you, you love him. That should be enough.

LADY. Unfortunately, the world makes one take other things into consideration in a marriage these days.

LITTLE OLD LADY (*flaring*). And that's why the whole world is going smash! Nobody will do anything for anybody, unless they get something for it, beforehand if

possible. Don't break with Varoné! You will hurt yourself the most.

LADY. Stop saying things like that to me! I won't listen!

[*The Lady turns away and sits in chair by the mirror, pouting.*

LITTLE OLD LADY. You know that what I say is true.

LADY (*defiantly*). I don't care.

LITTLE OLD LADY. It isn't often that a mother proposes for a daughter; but you will marry Varoné, won't you?

LADY (*in a rage*). No, no, *no!* I will not marry him, *I will not!*

LITTLE OLD LADY (*edging apologetically toward the hall door*). I shall be hoping so — anyway — dearie —

[*Blows her a ghost of a kiss, and is gone.*

The Lady sits musing by the mirror.

Like a flame from the fire, the Other Woman rises from the fireplace. She is a pulsating, vital creature in a gown as glowing as the flames themselves. As she steps out into the room, the Lady looks up and sees her.

LADY (*again in her grand manner*). And pray, who are you?

OTHER WOMAN. I am the Other Woman in his life.

LADY. The Other Woman? Is there another woman in Varoné's life?

OTHER WOMAN. There is always the Other Woman in every man's life. He may not have met her yet, but she is always there; and usually she is pretty bad.

LADY. Are you?

OTHER WOMAN. I am one of the worst. I have all of the lures, all of the charms that most women know, but few dare to use — unless they are scarlet, as I am.

LADY. You seem to glory in your — color.

OTHER WOMAN. Why shouldn't I? Poppies and flame roses do not hang their heads in shame because nature gave them the color of blood.

LADY. How dare you come here?

OTHER WOMAN. You invited me.

LADY (*aghast*). *I?*

OTHER WOMAN. You started to wonder about me, after his mother had gone, and to dream about me, then I came.

LADY. The insolence!

OTHER WOMAN. Oh, no! Oh, no! Why shouldn't I come? Aren't we really — sisters?

LADY. Sisters?

OTHER WOMAN. You are pure and gain your ends with guile and in obscure ways. While I — am what people know I am. I take the direct road and gain my ends openly. I am elemental, without fear, vital. No man on earth can resist me!

LADY. I am sure my Varoné would never look at you.

OTHER WOMAN. Ha, you have the false security of a virgin — one of those over-saintly, milk-white ones.

LADY. I would have you understand that my emotions are not milk-white.

OTHER WOMAN. Perhaps not, but your conventions are. You are just the kind that is easiest for me to rob of your men.

LADY. What makes you think that?

OTHER WOMAN. Because I *know.*

LADY. Ha!

OTHER WOMAN. Yes, it's my business to know. How do you suppose it is that women of my — shall we say, *color* — manage to have in their train so many of the most desirable men of a great city? Do you think those men come to us in *preference* to you? Ah, no! It is usually because women like you have placed themselves upon such freezing pedestals that the poor male things can't ever come to a companionable understanding with your kind. You think so well of yourselves that you carelessly discard your men, as one would cards in a game of chance. Then is when we catch them — when their hearts are bruised, crying for sympathy. Then is when we score. We give them everything — and hold them!

LADY. That may apply to the men you know. Not to Varoné.

OTHER WOMAN. How little you know of life, you who depict it with a pencil and a typewriter! No wonder magazine stories are so stupidly done to those who know life. Those stories are written by and for people who know nothing of life. Well, let me tell you something — for every man like Varoné there is always some scarlet woman waiting around the corner. And he will be easiest to get just after you turn him down.

LADY (*suspiciously*). May I ask — do you know Lord Varoné — *now?*

OTHER WOMAN. No, and I don't even know what he looks like.

LADY. Then why are you so concerned about him?

OTHER WOMAN (*with great sincerity*). I want to save him.

LADY. Save him? From what?

OTHER WOMAN. From me — or from women like me That is why I came here — to beg you not to throw him over. He is pure gold. Can't you see that?

LADY. Of course. I would be blind, if I did not. But I have a career to think of. Marriage to any man I loved would send it up in smoke. I shall marry some one for whom I care nothing. That's what I shall do. Then I shall be safe.

OTHER WOMAN. And Varoné — what will become of him?

LADY. I shall break with him gently, slowly, so that he will not realize what is happening till it is all over. By that time it will be too late for you to get him. He will be reconciled to his fate.

OTHER WOMAN. You are willing to take a greater risk than I would. Don't do it. I want *you* to have Varoné. You are so worthy of him. Please take him.

LADY. No! I will not be moved by your mawkish sentimentality.

OTHER WOMAN. Remember — if you don't take him, I will.

LADY. You cannot move me with such a bluff.

OTHER WOMAN. Very well. I gave you the first chance at

him. Now I'll take him. And how I shall laugh, and laugh, and laugh at you both — when I crush him — so that he can never rise again! Ha, ha, ha, h-a-a-!

[*With a wild laugh, like a dart of flame, she is gone. The Lady stands nonplussed.*

LADY. I wonder if she is right? Could a woman like that get him? I wonder —

[*But her musing is broken by a strange, unexpected happening. There is a gay ripple of childish laughter, the pillows on the chaise longue are hurled to the four corners of the room, and the Two Adorable Children leap out, — one from behind the cushions, the other from under the chaise. They are both girls, one blonde, the other brunette, at least eight or nine years old, though they might be almost any age, since they are the rare type that have caught in their hearts the universal spirit of childhood. They have not started to be young ladies in their cradles; in fact, when they have really and truly grown up to the age when one is considered a young lady, they may forget themselves sometimes and bubble forth with some delightfully impulsive remark. Perhaps they are distant cousins of Peter Pan, and will never quite grow up. I don't know. But I hope they won't, for as they now leap from their hiding places, I want them to remain Adorables forever. The Adorable Blonde is in a fluffy dancing frock, simulating a great pink rose, but the Adorable Brunette is in a boy's costume of pink, with her hair well tucked under a boyish cap.*

BLONDE (*happily*). There she is, *there!*

BRUNETTE Ha, ha! (*Clap hands*) You didn't know we were here, did you?

BLONDE (*as they both rush to the Lady*). Say you didn't know, say you didn't!

BRUNETTE. Say it, say it!

LADY. You dear, adorable children! Of course I didn't know you were here. How could I?

BLONDE (*to Brunette*). You see, I told you she wouldn't be thinking of us as anywhere at all!

LADY. But I must say — I don't understand. What is it all about?

[*In a rush.*

BRUNETTE. Well, you see —

BLONDE. No, let me tell! It was my idea!

BRUNETTE. But I *did* it! Let me tell her!

BLONDE. No, me, me, *me!*

LADY (*very kindly, for with the advent of the two Adorables she seems to have developed a wonderful gentleness that one would hardly have suspected she had anywhere about her*). You must both tell me, but one at a time. You begin.

[*To Blonde.*

BLONDE. Well, we've just come from dancing school. And — and they had a fancy-dress ball there and — and we fooled everybody there, that is at *first!*

LADY. How did you fool them?

BRUNETTE. Oh, she hasn't guessed yet! Goody, goody, goody!

BLONDE. Ha, ha, ha! We even fooled you, even *you!*

LADY. Yes, but how? How did you fool me? About what?

BLONDE. Look! She isn't a boy at all! (*Jerks cap off Brunette's head and her hair falls in a mass about her shoulders*) Look!

BRUNETTE. I had a dress just like hers, but I wanted to be a boy just for once — to see how it felt — so after we got to the party, I changed clothes with Jimmie Smith. We had a terribly hard time — we had to do it behind Mrs. Smith's back. She's broad enough in the middle, but she doesn't always keep the middle still, you know.

BLONDE. Especially when she laughs.

BRUNETTE. Oh, yes! But Jimmie — you should have seen Jimmie in my dress! He was *too* funny! When he walks, his legs work *in* instead of out. Just like this.

[*Demonstrates Jimmie's walk.*

BLONDE. But everybody thought she really *was* a boy.

BRUNETTE. It was perfect!

BLONDE. Anyhow, she says she felt like a girl all the time just the same.

BRUNETTE. Wasn't that queer?

LADY (*drawing them to her, on the chaise*). You dear, adorable Adorables!

BRUNETTE. Well, aren't you going to undress us for bed?

LADY (*surprised*). I?

BLONDE. We thought you would. We're awfully tired.

BRUNETTE. And sleepy.

LADY. I don't know whether I should. Whose children are you?

BLONDE (*disappointed*). Oh, don't you know?

BRUNETTE. Pshaw, you seemed so kind. We thought it was all decided.

LADY. Decided? What are you talking about?

BLONDE (*with an air of apology*). She's so inexperienced. I guess we'll have to tell her.

BRUNETTE. I guess so.

BLONDE. We're only the kiddies that come to you in your dream.

BRUNETTE. And when your dream wakes up — poof, we are no more.

[*Blows.*

BLONDE. Unless you decide to want us really and truly.

BRUNETTE (*clamoring over her*). Oh, please want us, please, please, *please!*

BLONDE (*slyly*). *He* wants us.

LADY. Who?

BLONDE. Voné!

LADY. Lord Varoné — o-oh.

[*At last she understands.*

BRUNETTE. We know why *you* don't want us. You're afraid you won't be able to write any more, that's why.

LADY. Perhaps it — is.

BLONDE (*gleefully*). Oh, but you don't know how jolly you would write, if you had us! We'd help you!

BRUNETTE. We'd even let you write all about us!

BLONDE. And *for* us!

BRUNETTE. Oh, yes!

LADY. You dears!

[*They are tantalizing fruit, but she still considers them forbidden — to her.*

BLONDE. And they'd be the very best stories anybody ever wrote!

BRUNETTE. Even better than Black Sambo or Peter Rabbit!

BLONDE. And that's saying a good deal, let me tell you.

BRUNETTE. Especially Peter — he's hard to beat.

BLONDE. But *hers* would be better stories. Just think — *we'd* be in them! And often when she least expected it, there we'd be, saying something terribly clever right in the middle of her story! And people would read them with delight! For they would be just like life.

BRUNETTE. Only heaps better!

BLONDE. And lots more exciting!

LADY (*hugging them to her*). You irresistible ones!

BLONDE (*struggling to free herself*). And — and we'd be lots more fun than that, even in the beginning.

BRUNETTE. Oh, yes! And all the time!

BLONDE. In the beginning — when we are tiny tinies — we'd crow at you from out of pink and blue cradles, and catch at your arm just to see you smile at us. And maybe you'd stop and look at us for a moment, wondering if we understood that you loved us.

BRUNETTE. Of course we would understand. All babies do, if their mothers only knew.

BLONDE. Sure! And later there would be parties! And you would dance with us on the green! Just like this — come, oh do!

BRUNETTE. Oh, do dance with us!

[*They catch the Lady's hands and pull her up. With a child on each side, she does a simple little dance with them, the three ending with an elaborate bow. The moment the dance is over, the children peck a quick kiss on her hands and dart toward the hall door.*

BOTH CHILDREN. Good-by, good-by!

LADY. Where are you going?

BOTH CHILDREN. Away, away!

LADY. Why do you leave me, when I've begun to love you?

BLONDE. You haven't decided to have us!

BRUNETTE. We can't stay unless you decide!

BLONDE. We can't, we can't!

BRUNETTE. Good-by, good-by!

[*The Lady seems stunned, so with gay laughter the two Adorables dash through the door and are — gone!*

LADY. No, oh, no! Don't go! I — (*But the only response is the distant echo of childish glee, which dies away as suddenly as it came*) And I didn't get their names! How can I ever know them again without their names? I must know their names! Wait, wait! Where are you? Gone! Really gone —

[*She sinks down on the chair before the mirror, in the position she had early in the scene. It is at this time that Marie hurries in.*

MARIE. I'm sorry to be so long, my Lady, but —

LADY (*startled*). Marie! Are you in my dream too?

MARIE. Your dream, my Lady?

LADY (*in a burst*). Oh, never mind, don't try to understand — but did you see them? Which way did they go?

MARIE. Which way did who go?

LADY (*almost beside herself*). The children, the children! The Adorable Ones!

MARIE. I went to the front door, but no one was there. It was the telephone that rang.

LADY. But didn't you see the children? Didn't you let them out the front way?

MARIE (*firmly*). I let no one out of the house. And I saw no children.

LADY. But they went that way! Why didn't I follow? Maybe I'm not dreaming now, after all. Marie, come here and pinch me.

MARIE. Pinch you? Where?

LADY. Anywhere. It doesn't matter where. If I feel it, then I know I'm awake. If I don't, then I *am* dreaming. Pinch, Marie, pinch! (*Marie pinches her on the arm. She winces*) Ouch! That settles it! At least I'm not dreaming.

MARIE. On the telephone was Lord Varoné —

LADY. Lord Varoné? Why didn't you tell me before?

MARIE. He is gone now. He did not ask to speak to you, but wanted me to give you a message —

LADY. Yes, yes!

MARIE. He said he would not disturb you, since you had given him a final answer for this evening, but in case you should desire to communicate with him on *another* matter, he is at the Lotus Club.

LADY. Lotus Club? That's only in the next block! Quick, Marie, get into your street coat! I can't telephone such a thing. I'll send a note. Hurry Marie, hurry!

MARIE. Yes, my Lady, yes!

[*Marie flies out the room.*

LADY (*she has already snatched up pen and paper and started to write the important note*). "Dear, dear Voné: (*then as she pauses for a moment*) Oh, if only the dream-ones were here to help me say it, so that it will mean the most — if only —

[*As if in answer to her desire, there appears in the doorway behind her the Little Old Lady, the Other Woman, and the Two Adorable Children. They speak in rapid succession: "We are here to help you!" "We'll always help you!" "We will, we will!"*

LADY. It almost seems as though they *were* here.

CHILDREN. We are!

LADY (*apparently not realizing their presence*). Well, I'll say it the best way I can.

LITTLE OLD LADY. That's it, dearie. He wouldn't want anything better. The best way you can, that's all, dearie.

LADY (*she has been writing rapidly during the above and continues to do so as she speaks*). "And dear Voné, if you don't

come and kidnap me the moment this reaches you — well, come, come, *come!* I'm dying to be with you in that darling country house, and the children want you too —" oh, no, I mustn't say *that!* (*She starts to scratch out the words, but her impulse carries her on*) Oh, never mind — "But most of all, I want you, Voné, *you!*"

[*Hurriedly she seals the letter with a kiss, much to the delight of the little company behind her, who flurry away the moment her task is completed.*

CURTAIN

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